

GUIDE TO RATING PERFORMANCE ELEMENTS: GENERIC PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

INSTRUCTIONS

The generic performance standards (GPS) are the primary basis for assigning element ratings in the Department of Agriculture. The GPS are to be applied to each critical element in the performance plan. *(Summary ratings are assigned by using a point scale after each element has been rated.)*

When evaluating an element, the rater should:

1. Read carefully each performance standard level beginning with Fully Successful (Level 3), considered the base level standard.
2. Determine which level best describes the employee's performance on the element. (Each and every criterion in the standards does not have to be met by the employee in absolute terms for the rater to assign a particular rating level. The sum of the employee's performance of the element must, in the rater's judgment, meet the assigned level's criteria).
3. Provide in writing, on the appraisal form, specific examples of accomplishments which support the assigned rating level.

Element ratings of Fully Successful do not require full written documentation unless the employee requests it. To assign a Fully Successful element rating, the rating official need only document in writing that: (1) the Fully Successful standards were met, and (2) that the rating was discussed in detail with the employee.

Occasionally, when rating some elements, a rating official may determine that an employee's performance on an element was not consistent. For example, the employee may have performed at the Superior level (Level 4) on several major activities within a critical element and at the Minimally Successful/Marginal level (Level 2) on several others. In such a case, the rating official must consider the overall effect of the employee's work on the element and make a judgment as to the appropriate rating level he or she will assign. The rationale for the decision must be documented on the rating form, citing specific accomplishments which support the decision.

Any supplemental standards that are included in the performance plan must also be considered by the rating official. Such standards are included in performance plans to supplement the GPS, not supplant them. Rating officials should consider such standards within the context of the GPS and rate elements accordingly.

Note:

- The nonsupervisory standards apply to all employees including team leaders and supervisors.
- The team leader and supervisory standards are in addition to the broader standards set forth in the nonsupervisory standards.

OUTSTANDING (LEVEL 5)

NONSUPERVISORY

This is a level of rare, high-quality performance. The quality and quantity of the employee's work substantially exceed Fully Successful standards and rarely leave room for improvement. The impact of the employee's work is of such significance that organizational objectives were accomplished that otherwise would not have been. The accuracy and thoroughness of the employee's work on this element are exceptionally reliable. Application of technical knowledge and skills goes beyond that expected for the position. The employee significantly improves the work processes and products for which he or she is responsible. Thoughtful adherence to procedures and formats, as well as suggestions for improvement in these areas, increase the employee's usefulness.

This person plans so that work follows the most logical and practical sequence; inefficient backtracking is avoided. He or she develops contingency plans to handle potential problems and adapts quickly to new priorities and changes in procedures and programs without losing sight of the longer-term purposes of the work. These strengths in planning and adaptability result in early or timely completion of work under all but the most extraordinary circumstances. Exceptions occur only when delays could not have been anticipated. The employee's planning skills result in cost-savings to the government.

In meeting element objectives, the employee handles interpersonal relationships with exceptional skill, anticipating and avoiding potential causes of conflict and actively promoting cooperation with clients, co-workers, and his or her supervisor.

The employee seeks additional work or special assignments related to this element at increasing levels of difficulty. The quality of such work is high and is done on time without disrupting regular work. Appropriate problems are brought to the supervisor's attention; most problems are dealt with routinely and with exceptional skill.

The employee's oral and written expressions are exceptionally clear and effective. They improve cooperation among participants in the work and prevent misunderstandings. Complicated or controversial subjects are presented or explained effectively to a variety of audiences so that desired outcomes are achieved.

TEAM LEADER

The employee is a superior team leader. The individual performs a variety of coordinating, coaching, facilitating, and planning functions for the team in a way that not only facilitates the accomplishment of organizational goals, but also results in substantial innovation in work processes that results in improvements in the overall quality, quantity, and timeliness of products, services, and/or work products assigned to the team. The employee applies an in-depth, expert knowledge of functions led, as well as superior leadership and team building skills and techniques in the day-to-day accomplishment of work priorities.

SUPERVISORY

The employee is a strong leader who works well with others and handles difficult situations with dignity and effectiveness. The employee encourages independence and risk-taking among subordinates, yet takes responsibility for their actions. The employee is open to the views of others, the employee promotes cooperation among peers and subordinates, while guiding, motivating, and stimulating positive responses. The employee's work performance demonstrates a strong commitment to fair treatment, equal opportunity, and the affirmative action objectives of the organization.

SUPERIOR (LEVEL 4)

NONSUPERVISORY

This is a level of unusually good performance. The quantity and quality of work under this element are consistently above average. Work products rarely require even minor revision. Thoroughness and accuracy of work are reliable.

The knowledge and skill the employee applies to this element are clearly above average, demonstrating problem-solving skill and insight into work methods and techniques. The employee follows required procedures and supervisory guidance so as to take full advantage of existing systems for accomplishing the organization's objectives. The employee plans the work under this element so as to proceed in an efficient, orderly sequence that rarely requires backtracking and consistently leads to completion of the work by established deadlines. He or she uses contingency planning to anticipate and prevent problems and delays. Exceptions occur when delays have causes outside the employee's control. Cost savings are considered in the employee's work planning.

The employee works effectively on this element with co-workers, clients, as appropriate, and his or her supervisor, creating a highly successful cooperative effort. He or she seeks out additional work or special assignments that enhance accomplishment of this element and pursues them to successful conclusion without disrupting regular work.

Problems which surface are dealt with; supervisory intervention to correct problems occurs rarely. The oral and written expression applied to this element are noteworthy for their clarity and effectiveness, leading to improved understanding of the work by other employees and clients of the organization. Work products are generally given sympathetic consideration because they are well-presented.

TEAM LEADER

The team leader effectively distributes work and monitors team members' work performance to ensure completion of work in accordance with the supervisor's work plans. The team leader coordinates, coaches, and facilitates work of the team in a way that enables the team to consistently deliver services and/or work products that exceed established standards of performance of quality and timeliness, and contribute significantly to the accomplishment of organizational goals and objectives.

SUPERVISORY

The employee is a good leader, establishes sound working relationships and shows good judgment in dealing with subordinates, considering their views. He or she provides opportunities for staff to have a meaningful role in accomplishing organizational objectives and makes special efforts to improve each subordinate's performance.

FULLY SUCCESSFUL (LEVEL 3)

NONSUPERVISORY

This is the level of good, sound performance. The quality and quantity of the employee's work under this element are those of a fully competent employee. The performance represents a level of accomplishment expected of the great majority of employees. The employee's work products fully meet the requirements of the element. Major revisions are rarely necessary; most work requires only minor revision. Tasks are completed in an accurate, thorough, and timely way. The employee's technical skills and knowledge are applied effectively to specific job tasks. In completing work assignments, he or she adheres to procedures and format requirements and follows necessary instructions from supervisors.

The employee's work planning is realistic and results in completion of work by established deadlines. Priorities are duly considered in planning and performing assigned responsibilities. Work reflects a consideration of costs to the government, when possible. In accomplishing element objectives, the employee's interpersonal behavior toward supervisors, co-workers, and users promotes attainment of work objectives and poses no significant problems. The employee completes special assignments so their form and content are acceptable and regular duties are not disrupted. The employee performs additional work as his or her workload permits. Routine problems associated with completing assignments are resolved with a minimum of supervision. The employee speaks and writes clearly and effectively.

TEAM LEADER

The team leader successfully leads subordinate team members in the accomplishment of assigned projects and workload. The leader ensures adequate understanding of the work requirements and coordinates, coaches, and facilitates accomplishment of the team's work. The team leader ensures that the unit provides timely and quality services and/or work products that contribute to the accomplishment of the organization's goals and objectives.

SUPERVISORY

The employee is a capable leader who works successfully with others and listens to suggestions. The employee rewards good performance and corrects poor performance through sound use of performance appraisal systems, performance-based incentives and, when needed, adverse actions. He/she selects and assigns employees in ways that use their skills effectively. The employee's work performance shows a commitment to fair treatment, equal opportunity, and the affirmative action objectives of the organization.

MARGINAL/MINIMALLY SUCCESSFUL (LEVEL 2)

NONSUPERVISORY

This level of performance, while demonstrating some positive contributions to the organization, shows notable deficiencies. It is below the level expected for the position, and requires corrective action. The quality, quantity or timeliness of the employee's work is less than Fully Successful, jeopardizing attainment of the element's objective.

There is much in the employee's performance that is useful. However, problems with quality, quantity or timeliness are too frequent or too serious to ignore. Performance is inconsistent and problems caused by deficiencies counterbalance acceptable work. These deficiencies cannot be overlooked since they create adverse consequences for the organization or create burdens for other personnel. When needed as input into another work process, the work may not be finished with such quality, quantity and timeliness that other work can proceed as planned.

Although the work products are generally of usable quality, too often they require additional work by other personnel. The work products do not consistently and/or fully meet the organization's needs. Although mistakes may be without immediate serious consequences, over time they are detrimental to the organization.

A fair amount of work is accomplished, but the quantity does not represent what is expected of Fully Successful employees. Output is not sustained consistently and/or higher levels of output usually result in a decrease in quality. The work generally is finished within expected timeframes but significant deadlines too often are not met. The employee's written communication usually considers the nature and complexity of the subject and the intended audience. It conveys the central points of information important to accomplishing the work. However, too often the communication is not focused, contains too much or too little information, and/or is conveyed in a tone that hinders achievement of the purpose of the communication. In communication to coworkers, the listener must question the employee at times to secure complete information or avoid misunderstandings.

TEAM LEADER

The team leader's performance, while demonstrating some positive contributions to the success of the organization, shows notable deficiencies. Performance is below the level expected for the position. The quality, quantity or timeliness of the team leader's work is less than Fully Successful. Performance is inconsistent and problems caused by deficiencies counterbalance acceptable work. The team leader does not always provide specific direction to team members on how to carry out assignments and/or adequately convey performance expectations, and/or provide an understanding of the goals of the organization or their team member roles in meeting those goals. The team leader does not always motivate the team and promote a team spirit. Performance at this level indicates that improvement or additional development is needed for the team leader to operate at an acceptable level.

SUPERVISORY

Inadequacies surface in performing supervisory duties. Deficiencies in areas of supervision over an extended period of time adversely affect employee productivity or morale, or organizational effectiveness. The Minimally Successful employee does not provide strong leadership or take the appropriate initiative to improve organizational effectiveness. For example, he or she too often fails to make decisions or fulfill supervisory responsibilities in a timely manner, to provide sufficient direction to subordinates on how to carry out programs, to give clear assignments and/or performance requirements, and/or to show an understanding of the goals of the organization or subordinates' roles in meeting those goals.

UNACCEPTABLE (LEVEL 1)

NONSUPERVISORY

The quantity and quality of the employee's work under this element are not adequate for the position. The employee's work products fall short of requirements of the element. He/she arrives late or often requires major revision because work is incomplete or inaccurate in content. The employee fails to apply adequate technical knowledge to complete the work of this element. Either the knowledge applied cannot produce the needed products, or it produces technically inadequate products or results. Lack of adherence to required procedures, instructions, and formats contributes to inadequate work products. Because the employee's work planning lacks logic or realism, critical work remains incomplete or is unacceptably late. Lack of attention to priorities causes delays or inadequacies in essential work; the employee has concentrated on incidental matters.

The employee's behavior obstructs the successful completion of the work by lack of cooperation with clients, supervisor, and/or co-workers, or by loss of credibility due to irresponsible speech or work activity. In dealing with special projects, the employee either sacrifices essential regular work or fails to complete the projects. The employee fails to adapt to changes in priorities, procedures, or program direction and, therefore, cannot operate adequately in relation to changing requirements. The oral and written expression the employee uses in accomplishing the work of this element lacks the necessary clarity for successful completion of required tasks. Communication failures interfere with completion of work.

TEAM LEADER

The team leader does not meet performance expectations on one or more critical elements. The team leader fails to properly distribute, monitor, and ensure completion of the team's workload. Due to these deficiencies, the team is unsuccessful in delivering work products that meet standards for quality, timeliness, and accuracy.

SUPERVISORY

Most of the following deficiencies are typically, but not always, common, characteristics of the employee's work:

- Inadequate guidance to subordinates;
- Inattention to work progress; and
- Failure to stimulate subordinates to meet goals.



Departmental Administration
Office of Human Capital Management
Departmental Human Resources Division